Both these roads have already been declared as National Highways.

(c) and (d) The State Road from Gopalpur to Raipur has been declared as National Highway No. 217 *vide* Notification No. S.O.(E) 923 dated 12.10.2000.

Rural cottage industries

†*175. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that condition of the conventional rural cottage industries is getting deplorable;

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take for the promotion of the rural industries; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES, AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) The Khadi and Village Industries sector consists essentially of conventional rural cottage industries. Considerable efforts have been made by the Government for the development of Khadi and Village Industries including conventional (traditional) rural cottage industries. The assistance provided to this sector consists of credit, training, technological and marketing support. As a result, these industries have been registering growth in production and employment. During the last three years the production of Khadi and Village Industries has increased from Rs. 4519.31 crore in 1997-98 to Rs. 7212.00 crore in 2000-2001 and employment has increased from 56.50 lakh to 62.73 lakh during the same period. In order to further strengthen the KVI sector, the Government has recently announced a package on 14.5.2001. The package mainly consists of Rebate Policy for five

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

years, option of Rebate and Market Development Assistance (MDA), Insurance cover to Khadi artisans, emphasis on improvement of Khadi products, creation of packaging and design facilities, measures to promote marketing, brand building, cluster development, focus on core areas and provision of additional working capital.

Use of chemicals for ripening and colouring of fruits and vegetables

*176. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the shop keepers are using Calcium Carbide for early ripening of mangoes while vegetables are found coloured;

(b) if so, what action is being taken against the offenders; and

(c) whether Government would increase the number of surprise checks to curtail this practice?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) to (c) There have been a few Press Reports alleging sale of artificially coloured vegetables and fruits ripened by use of carbide gas in the markets.

The Preveniton of Food Adulteraiton Rules 1955, prohibit the sale of fruits which have been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas, commonly known as carbide gas, and use of unauthorized colouring matter to fruits and vegetables.

The Food Health Authorities of State/UT Governments have been asked from time to time to keep a vigil on unauthorized colouring of food as well as use of carbide gas in ripening of fruits and to take legal action for violation of the Rules.

Government of NCT of Delhi has informed that on conducting raids they have found some retail shop keepers using Calcium Carbide for ripening of mangoes. Similarly, samples of some